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Department of State **TELEGRAM**

SECRET 777

PAGE 01 SAIGON 11670 01 OF 02 231033Z

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ACTION SS-45

INFO OCT-01 /046 W

P 230930Z JUL 71
FM AMEMBASSY SAIGON
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7707
AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU PRIORITY

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 SAIGON 11670

EXDIS.

SUBJECT: KY REPRESENTATIONS ON ELECTIONS

021736
DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDC, MH
REVIEWED BY Joan Izenberg DATE 1/26/82
RDS☐or XDS☐EXT. DATE
TS AUTH. REASON(S)
ENDORSE EXISTING MARKINGS ☐
DECLASSIFIED☑ RELEASABLE☑
RELEASE DENIED☐
PA or FOI EXEMPTIONS

1. SUMMARY: KY ASKED ME TO CALL ON HIM THIS MORNING. HE WAS ATTENDED BY KHOI. KY SAID THAT HARASSMENT AND INTERFERENCE BY PRESIDENT THIEU AND THE PROVINCE CHIEFS IN HIS CAMPAIGN TO OBTAIN 100 ENDORSEMENTS FOR HIS NOMINATION HAS NOW REACHED THE POINT WHERE IT WAS UNLIKELY HE COULD QUALIFY BY THE AUGUST 4 FILING DATE. IF HE DID NOT RPT NOT QUALIFY GENERAL MINH DEFINITELY WILL WITHDRAW FROM THE RACE AND THIEU WOULD WIN IN AN UNCONTESTED ELECTION. SUCH AN ELECTION WILL MAKE "AN ABSURDITY" OF THE U.S. INSISTENCE THAT THIS ELECTION BE REASONABLY FREE AND FAIR. AND IN THESE CIRCUMSTANCES.
HE CAN GIVE US NO ASSURANCE THAT CONSTITUTIONAL CONTINUITY AND POLITICAL STABILITY CAN BE MAINTAINED IN VIET-NAM. HE APPEALED FOR U.S. HELP TO STOP THE INTERFERENCE WITH HIS CAMPAIGN. END SUMMARY

2. Y OPENED THE CONVERSATION BY SAYING HE WISHED TO DESCRIBE THE DIFFICULTIES HE WAS ENCOUNTERING IN GETTING THE NECESSARY PROVINCIAL COUNCILOR ENDORSEMENTS FOR HIS NOMINATION. EVERY OBSTACLE HAS BEEN PUT IN HIS WAY, AND EVERY PRESSURE EXERTED ON HIS SUPPORTERS: HIS CADRES ARE BEING HARASSED AND THREATENED; MANY PROVINCE CHIEFS WERE UNAVAILABLE WHEN HIS NOMINATORS APPEARED TO HAVE THEIR ENDORSEMENT CERTIFIED--ONE HAS BEEN WAITING SEVEN DAYS, ANOTHER FOUR DAYS; PROVINCIAL COUNCILORS WHO WOULD ENDORSE HIM ARE BEING THREATENED, BRIBED TO REVERSE THEMSELVES, AND IN SOME CASES BOUGHT OFF IN ADVANCE; PROVINCIAL COUNCILORS ARE BEING PREEMPTED TO SUPPORT THIEU EVEN THOUGH HE DOESSNOT NEED THEIR ENDORSEMENTS, ETC. HE SAID HE

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EXDIS EXDIS EXDIS EXDIS

Department of State **TELEGRAM**

SECRET

PAGE 02 SAIGON 11670 01 OF 02 231033Z

IS PREPARING A LETTER GIVING THE DETAILS, WHICH HE WILL SEND ME TODAY.

3. KY SAID HE HAS MORE THAN THE NECESSARY NUMBER OF NOMINEES. KHOI ADDED AS OF THIS MORNING KY HAS 30 CERTIFIED ENDORSEMENTS AND ANOTHER 75 ARE READY TO SUPPORT HIM BUT MOST HAVE NOT BEEN ABLE TO GET THE PROVINCE CHIEFS TO CERTIFY THE PAPERS. KY SAID THE PROVINCE CHIEFS ARE NOW ALL IN SAIGON FOR A MEETING WITH THIEU, AND WILL NOT BE GOING BACK TO THEIR PROVINCES UNTIL MONDAY. THIS LEAVES ONLY 10 DAYS TO THE AUGUST 4 DEADLINE FOR CERTIFICATION. IF THE OBSTRUCTION CONTINUES, AS HE EXPECTS IT WILL, HE WILL NOT BE ABLE TO QUALIFY FOR THE NOMINATION. KY SAID GENERAL MINH WILL DEFINITELY WITHDRAW FROM THE RACE IF KY IS DISQUALIFIED, LEAVING THIEU TO WIN WITHOUT A CONTEST. KY SAID THIEU ORIGINALLY THOUGHT THAT KY WOULD NOT BE ABLE TO GET THE NECESSARY MINIMUM, AND, WHEN HE REALIZED THAT HE COULD HE HAS STEPPED UP THE PRESSURE ON THE PROVINCE CHIEFS TO TAKE WHATEVER ACTION WAS NECESSARY TO KEEP KY OUT OF THE RACE.

4. KY SAID THAT AMBASSADOR BUNKER AND MR KISSINGER HAD ASSURED HIM THAT THE U.S. WANTS A FREE AND FAIR ELECTION, BUT WHAT IS GOING ON MAKES AN ABSURDITY OF THIS HOPE.

5. I ASKED KY IF HE HAD FILED COMPLAINTS WITH THE SUPREME COURT (WHICH SERVES AS THE ELECTION COUNCIL). HE SAID HE HAS PRIVATELY BROUGHT THE SITUATION TO THE ATTENTION OF THE SUPREME COURT, AND WILL GO TO THE COURT AND MAKE A PUBLIC ISSUE OF THIS IF HIS APPEAL TO US FAILS TO PRODUCE ANY RESULTS.

6. I ASKED IF HE INTENDED TO SEE THIEU. HE SAID THAT HE WOULD SEE THE PRIME MINISTER, WHO AS MINISTER OF INTERIOR IS IN CHARE OF ELECTION ARRANGEMENTS, BUT LATER SAID HE WAS SENDING A LETTER TO THE PRIME MINISTER ON THE SUBJECT. I SUGGESTED THAT HE ALSO SEE THE PRIME MINISTER, AND HE SAID HE WOULD "CALL HIM IN."

7. I SAID THERE WERE REPORTS HE INTENDED TO HAVE A PRESS CONFERENCE ON THE SUBJECT ON JUNE 27. HE SAID IF THE SITUATION CONTINUED HE WOULD GO TO THE PUBLIC, BUT THE DATE WAS NOT FIXED.

8. KY THEN SAID THAT THIEU HAS CREATED ALL THESE DIFFICULTIES BECAUSE HE IS NOT POPULAR AND KNOWS HE CANNOT WIN IN A FREE ELECTION. THERE-

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EXDIS EXDIS EXDIS EXDIS EXDIS

Department of State **TELEGRAM**

SECRET

PAGE 03 SAIGON 11670 01 OF 02 231033Z

FORE HE MUST KNOCK KY OUT OF THE RACE, HOPING TO BEAT MINH IN A TWO-WAY RACE, BUT MINH WILL WITHDRAW, LEAVING THIEU WITH NO CONTEST. IT IS ESSENTIAL FOR THE FUTURE OF VIET-NAM THAT THERE BE CONSTITUTIONAL CONTINUITY AND POLITICAL STABILITY, BUT IF THIEU WINS WITHOUT A CONTEST

WHAT KIND OF MORAL OR LEGAL AUTHORITY WILL HE HAVE TO GOVERN? HOW WILL HE BE ABLE TO UNITE THE COUNTRY AGAINST THE COMMUNIST THREAT? HOW WILL HE BE ABLE TO GOVERN FOR FOUR MORE YEARS? "I HAVE ALWAYS BEEN STRAIGHT WITH YOU," KY SAID, "AND I WANT TO BE NOW. I CAN GIVE YOU NO ASSURANCES OF POLITICAL STABILITY IF THIS ELECTION IS RIGGED."

9. THIS WAS A POINTED REFERENCE TO A COUP D'ETAT, AND I SAID "I THINK YOU AND MR KHOI ARE WELL AWARE THAT THE MAINTENANCE OF THE CONSTITUTIONAL SYSTEM IS ESSENTIAL TO U.S. POLICY. WITHOUT THAT I CAN GIVE YOU NO ASSURANCE THAT THE U.S. WOULD CONTINUE TO SUPPORT VIET-NAM."

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EXDIS EXDIS EXDIS EXDIS

POL 14 VIET S

Department of State **TELEGRAM**

SECRET 274

PAGE 01 SAIGON 11670 02 OF 02 231604Z

53
ACTION SS-45

INFO OCT-01 /046 W

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P 230930Z JUL 71
FM AMEMBASSY SAIGON
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7708
AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU PRIORITY

S E C R E T SECTION 2 OF 2 SAIGON 11670

EXDIS

10. KY SAID HE WAS WELL AWARE OF THAT, AND THIS POINTED TO THE DANGERS IN THE SITUATION. HE ASKS THAT WE MOVE QUICKLY TO SEE THAT THE INTERFERENCE IN HIS CAMPAIGN STOP, FOR THERE WAS LITTLE TIME LEFT. I SAID I WOULD BRING THE CONVERSATION TO THE ATTENTION OF WASHINGTON AND AMBASSADOR BUNKER. HE ASKED WHEN THE AMBASSADOR WOULD RETURN, AND I SAID SUNDAY NIGHT.

11. COMMENTS: WE HAVE INDEPENDENT EVIDENCE OF SUBSTANTIAL INTERFERENCE WITH KY'S EFFORTS TO OBTAIN ENDORSEMENTS. THERE IS NO ASSURANCE THAT KY ACTUALLY WOULD QUALIFY EVEN IF THE OBSTACLES WERE REMOVED, BUT THE CHANCES ARE THAT HE COULD. IN ANY EVENT EVEN IF HE MISSED BY A FEW, THE CRECORD WOULD LOOK FAR BETTER THAN IT DOES NOW. AS FOR HIS CATEGORICAL STATEMENT IZHAT MINH WOULD WITHDRAW FROM THE RACE IF KY IS DISQUALIFIED, WE THINK THE CHANCES OF THIS ARE VERY LIKELY. MINH HAS ALWAYS BEEN A MOST RELUCTANT OENDIDATE AND HAS ALWAYS REGARDED KY'S CANDIDACY AS IMPROVING HIS CHANCES. ON JULY 19, MINH TOLD HITCHCOCK THE CHANCES WERE 90 PERCENT THAT HE WOULD WITHDRAW FROM THE RACE. IF KY IS DISQUALIFIED KY WILL DO EVERYTHING HE CAN TO PERSUADE MINH TO WITHDRAW AS WELL, ARGUING THAT
THE ELECTION WILL BE RIGGED AGAINST HIM AS THE NOMINATION WAS AGAINST KY AND THAT MINH HASN'T A HOPE OF WINNING. THIS MAY WELL BE ENOUGH TO PUSH MINH OVER THE LINE AND WITHDRAW.

12. THIEU'S ADVISORS ARE CONVINCED MINH IS GOING TO RUN, OR AT LEAST THAT IS WHAT THEY HAVE TOLD US. THEY INSIST THAT THERE WILL BE A RACE, AND OUR FEARS OF NO CONTEST ARE GROUNDLESS. THEY SIMPLY

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EXDIS EXDIS EXDIS EXDIS

Department of State **TELEGRAM**

SECRET

PAGE 02 SAIGON 11670 02 OF 02 231604Z

REFUSE TO ENTERTAIN THE POSSIBILITY THAT MINH MIGHT WITHDRAW. THEY OBVIOUSLY WANT A RACE WITH MINH WHICH THEY ARE CONFIDENT OF WINNING, BUT AS BETWEEN A RACE WITH KY AND MINH, WITH A LESS CERTAIN OUTCOME FOR THIEU, AND A NO-CONTEST WITH ALL THE PROBLEMS THIS WILL CREATE FOR US IN VIET-NAM, THEY MAY NOT HAVE FACED UP TO THIS ISSUE. ONE VIEW IN THE EMBASSY IS THAT FACED WITH THIS CHOICE, THEY WOULD ELECT FOR A THREE-MAN RACE, BUT THE OTHER VIEW IS ALSO HELD, NAMELY THAT THEY WOULD PREFER NO CONTEST.
BERGER

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